# Joint Standing Parliamentary Committee

*OBJECT:* To provide machinery for close and rapid co-operation in establishing equality of status, pay, and opportunity between men and women.

# ELECTION PROGRAMME

*TO THE MEN AND WOMEN OF THE NATION, TO POLITICAL PARTIES, AND TO ALL PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATES*

WHILE conscious of the fact that all forms of legislation are the concern of men and women citizens alike, the Joint Standing Parliamentary Committee in furtherance of its object, puts forward the following programme of reforms which it considers essential to effect the full emancipation of women.

## I. ECONOMIC EQUALITY

**Equal Pay**

The recognition of women's right to contract, to earn, to receive equal pay for equal work and to have equal opportunities with men for entry to and promotion in their work is fundamental. In the Civil Service, in Local Government employment and in the teaching profession there should be equal pay for equal work—the rate for the job.

In industry, regulations and restrictions should apply equally to men and women and there should be no artificial division of work into "men's work" and "women's work" with the resultant "male" and "female" rates of pay. The only real protection for wage-earning women is equal status and equal pay.

It should be the duty of the new Wages Councils to ensure that, in assessing minimum rates of wages, these shall be the same for women as for men.

**Equal Opportunities**

New occupations have been opened to women during the war, but entry to the Diplomatic and Consular Services is still denied to them (although there have been one or two temporary appointments); there is no provision for the employment of women in the new Foreign Service; and it is rare for women to be appointed to the higher posts in the Civil Service and in the Education Service.

Limitation on women's employment should be removed and, in making appointments, personal suitability and not the sex of the candidates should be the deciding factor.

**Equality in Social Insurance**

The differences based on sex or marriage under National Insurance should be abolished. In particular:—

1. There should be equality of contributions and benefits for men and women.
2. The retirement age should be the same for men and women.
3. Class III* should be abolished. Married women should not be treated as a special class but should be included, where earners, with other workers in Class I* receiving equal benefits, and without power of exemption; where employed as housewives they should be included in Class II*, as earning their living though not under the ordinary contract of service, as direct contributors with direct benefits.
4. Compulsory insurance in Class II* should apply also to other women working as housewives in the homes of their families or otherwise in an unpaid capacity, without exemption, even if their actual monetary income is under £75 a year.

* See classification paragraph 36 in the Government's White Paper on Social Security.

## II. EQUAL STATUS FOR THE MARRIED WOMEN

A woman should not be deprived of her fundamental rights of citizenship because she is married. She should be free to decide for herself whether or not she will engage in paid work and there should be no restriction upon her choice of employment on account of marriage.

**Nationality of Married Women**

Married women should have the same right as men to retain or change their nationality.

**Income Tax of Married Persons**

There should be equal treatment between men and women with regard to assessment, payment and reliefs in income tax matters.

**Purchase of Women: Marriage Contracts**

In all territories under British jurisdiction it should be laid down definitely that no woman, whatever her race, shall be sold by her father or alleged proprietor; that no marriage contract shall be made for any girl under fourteen years of age, or for a girl over fourteen years without her consent; and that there shall be no inheritance of a widow by her husband's heir.

## III. EQUAL MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

All existing laws of Great Britain dealing with solicitation by women should be repealed and should be replaced by a genuinely equal law under which any person, whether man or woman, wilfully annoying or molesting any other person in any street or public place is guilty of an offence. In all cases, the evidence of the person alleged to have been annoyed or molested shall be required before a conviction can be obtained.

## IV. WOMEN POLICE

Women police should be an integral part of every Police Force, with training, status and pay equal to that of men, and with equal opportunities for gaining wide practical experience of criminal procedure and of all branches of police work.

## V. WOMEN PEERS

Peeresses in their own right should be allowed to exercise their right to sit and vote in the House of Lords.

## VI. THE FUTURE

The contribution that women can make to post-war planning should be recognised, and competent women should be invited to serve on every committee and commission set up for national and international purposes.

Women are concerned to make their full contribution to the safeguarding of the future; consequently, they are anxious to secure full equality in the national sphere immediately in order that they need spend no more time, money and effort in establishing their fundamental rights as citizens within their own country, but may be free to devote their energies to the well-being of their own land and to the establishment and maintenance of satisfactory international relationships within a world at peace.

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*Further copies of this Election Programme may be obtained from the Hon. Secretary, Joint Standing Parliamentary Committee,*

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The Joint Standing Parliamentary Committee consists of the following organisations:—National Council for Equal Citizenship, National Women Citizens' Association, National Union of Women Teachers, Open Door Council, St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance, Suffragette Fellowship, Women's Freedom League.

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